



A Guide for Businesses In the City of Fairfax



City of Fairfax Services and Regulations

A Guide for Businesses

Welcome to the City of Fairfax. We take great pride in the level and quality of services we provide to our residents and businesses.

The following pages offer a summary of the steps involved in opening and operating a business within the city. Please take a few moments to review this booklet, and if you have any questions, our staff will be delighted to provide assistance and guidance.

We are pleased to have you as a part of our community and look forward to working with you.

Code Administration and Zoning Regulations

Nonresidential and Residential Use Permits

Before a business may open in the city, individuals must apply for a nonresidential or residential use permit from the Zoning Office. The application fee is \$25.

Once your application is submitted, the zoning administrator will conduct a review to ensure that applicable zoning regulations have been satisfied. Use inspections are performed by the Office of Code Administration (with associated fees) prior to the permit being granted. Should any building improvements be required, the zoning administrator ensures that appropriate actions have been completed, and that all necessary inspections have been conducted and approvals granted. Upon completion, the use permit is granted. For more information, please contact:

Zoning Office
Room 101, City Hall
10455 Armstrong Street
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 385-7820

Fire Prevention Code Permits

Annual fire prevention code permit inspections are conducted by the Office of Code Administration. Annual fees for fire prevention code permits range from \$50 to \$500, depending on the type of activity. For more information, please contact:

Office of Code Administration
Room 103, City Hall
10455 Armstrong Street
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 385-7830

Health Inspection

The following types of establishments currently require inspection by the Health Department: food establishments, beauty/barber shops, medical/dental clinics, swimming pools, health spas, and daycare operations that serve food.

For more information on Health Inspections, please contact:

Fairfax County Health Department
10777 Main Street, Suite 102A
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 246-2444 (consumer services)

Rental Housing Occupancy Permit

A rental occupancy permit is required of property owners for any single family dwelling that is used as rental housing property. The permit is issued on a one-time basis as long as the rental use of the property is continuous. Contact the rental permit staff in the Office of Code Administration (703) 385-7830 for more information.

Special Use Permits/Special Exception Permit

Before leasing or renting space for a business, or operating a business from your home, contact the Zoning Administrator to determine if your type of business is allowed by right in the proposed location. If not, a special use permit or a special exception permit will be required.

In cases where a special use permit or special exception permit is required, an advertised public hearing must be held. The initial application fee for a special use permit or special exception permit is \$800 for City Council cases and \$500 for Board of Zoning Appeals cases (other fees may apply). Applications are available in the Zoning Office.

The Zoning Administrator will also advise individuals on zoning regulations in general, as well as on specific regulations covering signs, new development and building additions.

Sign Permits

All business sign installations require sign permits, and in certain cases sign installations may also require building and electrical permits. Sign permits are available through the Zoning Office. The fee for a permanent sign permit is based on the size of the sign and varies from \$2-\$5 per square foot.

Sign permits are also required for posting most temporary signs. Signs in the Old Town Historic Overlay District and in the Transition Overlay District must also be reviewed by the Board of Architectural Review (BAR). The Sign Ordinance is set forth in Section 110-116 through Section 110-186 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Board of Architectural Review

Any exterior change to a commercial building, including landscaping and/or painting, requires Board of Architectural Review (BAR) approval. The Board meets twice monthly. The Board has additional authority over signs in the city's Old Town Historic Overlay District and the Transition Overlay District. Applications for BAR review are available from the Zoning Office. Articles XVII and XVIII of the City Code cover the zoning regulations regarding the Historic District, the Transition Overlay District, and the Architectural Control District.

Board of Zoning Appeals

Members of the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) are appointed by the Circuit Court with the recommendation of the City Council and as such, they function, together, as a quasi-judicial board. The BZA reviews and considers applications for certain Special Exceptions, Special Use Permits and Variances not specifically reserved for the City Council or Planning Commission. In Addition, the BZA has the important role of ruling on appeals by aggrieved parties regarding any decision of the Zoning Administrator or administrative officer.

Office of the Board of Zoning Appeals
Room 101, City Hall
Department of Community Development and Planning
10455 Armstrong Street
Fairfax, VA 22030

Building Permits

Building permits must be obtained for all new construction, enlargement, alteration, removal, or destruction of a building or structure in the city. Some construction will also require a site improvement plan. Permits are also required for installation of any general wiring or electrical devices, plumbing and gas installations, mechanical installations, and fire alarm or suppression installations.

Residents contracting to have work done on their homes should ensure that the contractor is properly licensed and bonded in the city; that a permit is taken out for the work to be done; and that appropriate inspections are made. Inspections are required during and upon completion of any project. Homeowners wishing to do their own work may do so by taking out a homeowner's permit. These permits can only be issued to homeowners who are doing their own work. Fee amount varies with the type of permit.

To obtain a permit, or request inspection services, please contact:

Office of Code Administration
Room 103, City Hall
10455 Armstrong Street
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 385-7830

Right-of-way/easement permits are also required for any street cuts/easements, or when contractors are working in the street right-of-way. The following offices should be contacted regarding these permits:

Department of Public Works
4401 Sideburn Road
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 385-7810

Department of Public Works
Street Division
3410 Pickett Road
Fairfax, VA 22031
(703) 385-7980

Copies of the zoning ordinance may be purchased from the Zoning Office for \$10.

Registration of “Trade Name”

Prospective businesses, unless they will be working under their own name or a corporate name (registered with the state), must register their “trade name” with the office listed below. All owners must register in person and pay a \$10 filing fee (cash only).

Clerk of the Circuit Court
Public Service Office
Fairfax County Judicial Center, 3rd Floor
4110 Chain Bridge Road
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 246-4100

Revenue and Licensing

The Office of the Commissioner of the Revenue can advise individuals on many tax and licensing procedures.

Commissioner of the Revenue
Room 210, City Hall
10455 Armstrong Street
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 385-7880

Business Professional and Occupational License

This is an annual license required of all persons/firms doing business in the City of Fairfax. In addition to licenses for business and occupation categories, business licenses are also required for individuals owning single family residential rental property, home improvement contractors, canvassers, peddlers, and non-charitable solicitors.

The deadline for new licenses is 30 days after the date the business began; renewals are due by **March 1** of the calendar tax year. With a few exceptions, the fee is based upon gross receipts. The City Business Professional and Occupational License Certificate must either be on display or be available for inspection, if requested.

City Business Return of Tangible Personal Property, Machinery, and Tools

Every person, business or professional owning tangible personal property and/or machinery and tools located within or doing business within the City of Fairfax, is subject to a tax and must file a report. The tax is based upon the total assessed value of the property. The deadline for filing the return is **May 1** of the calendar tax year. Information on filing may be obtained from:

Commissioner of the Revenue
Room 210, City Hall
10455 Armstrong Street
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 385-7881

Personal property taxes are due by **October 5** of each year. Information on billing and collection of taxes can be obtained from:

City Treasurer
Room 208, City Hall
10455 Armstrong Street
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 385-7902

Security Alarm Permit

Every owner or tenant of any commercial or industrial premises protected by an operative security alarm system is required to obtain a security alarm permit. A one-time fee of \$25 is charged for the permit. A penalty of \$50 will be assessed against the owner or tenant of any premises with an operative alarm system who fails to obtain a permit. Every alarm system owner (including residential property) is allowed two false alarms annually. A service charge of \$50 is assessed for the third false alarm, \$100 for the fourth false alarm, \$150 for the fifth false alarm, \$200 for the sixth false alarm, \$250 for the seventh false alarm, \$300 for the eighth false alarm, and \$500 for the ninth false alarm and each false alarm thereafter in each calendar year. Alarm permit applications are available through the Treasurer's Office.

City Treasurer
Room 208, City Hall
10455 Armstrong Street
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 385-7900

Vehicle Stickers

All vehicles garaged in the City of Fairfax must clearly display current city auto decal stickers. Stickers must be purchased within 60 days of arrival in the city and renewed annually. To obtain a City Sticker you must first register the car with the Commissioner of the Revenue. Stickers are sold in the Treasurers Office. The cost of the sticker is \$25.00 for vehicles and \$15.00 for motorcycles.

Commissioner of the Revenue
Room 210, City Hall
10455 Armstrong Street
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 385-7882

City Treasurer
Room 208, City Hall
10455 Armstrong Street
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 385-7900

Water and Sewer Services

Water and sewer services may be arranged by contacting the Department of Transit and Utilities. There is an initial service charge of \$15 plus a minimum deposit of \$35 or an estimate of the amount of one month's bill. The deposit accrues 5 percent simple interest annually and is refundable when the service is terminated and the account is paid in full. The service charge and the deposit must be paid in advance. For more information please contact:

Department of Utilities
Room 205, City Hall
10455 Armstrong Street
Fairfax, VA
(703) 385-7915

Fire and Emergency Medical Services *Emergency Calls 911*

The City of Fairfax sponsors an extensive fire prevention and fire safety education program. Individuals should contact the program coordinator for information and assistance.

Fire Department
Public Education Officer
10455 Armstrong St. #103
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 273-8109

Police Services *Emergency Calls 591-5511*

When applying for city business licenses, individuals are requested to fill out an emergency contact form for police records. In addition, upon request, the police department will perform a security check for businesses.

For more information on this program, or other programs available to assist businesses, individuals should contact the crime prevention number listed below.

Police Department
John C. Wood Municipal Complex
3730 Old Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 385-7924 (Non-Emergency calls)
(703) 385-7946 (Crime Prevention)

Local Taxes

The City of Fairfax has one of the lowest overall tax burdens of any jurisdiction in the Washington Metropolitan area. The Office of the Commissioner of the Revenue has information on specific rates affecting businesses.

Real Estate Tax

Real estate is assessed annually in the City of Fairfax. Information on real estate assessments may be obtained from:

Office of Real Estate Assessment
Room 206, City Hall
10455 Armstrong Street
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 385-7840

Real estate taxes are due and payable twice a year. Information on billing and collection of taxes can be obtained from:

City Treasurer
Room 208, City Hall
10455 Armstrong Street
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 385-7904

Utility Tax

The current utility tax rate on City of Fairfax commercial users of telephones and water is 15 percent of the first \$500 per month.

For electric the monthly tax is \$1.72 plus the rate of \$0.010112 on each kwh not to exceed \$75.00 monthly.

For natural gas the monthly tax is \$1.27 plus the rate of \$0.05295 on each CCF (or equivalent measure) not to exceed \$75.00 monthly.

Meals Tax

The City of Fairfax has a 2 percent tax on all food and drink, including alcoholic beverages, offered for sale in a form ready for consumption.

Other Local Taxes

Other local taxes which may or may not be applicable, depending on your business, include a bank stock tax, recordation tax, local sales tax, cigarette tax, and a transient lodging tax.

State of Virginia

There are a number of state forms that may or may not be required, depending on the type and/or size of a business. The offices listed below will be able to provide specific information and assistance to businesses.

Establishing a Business in Virginia

Incorporating in Virginia; Authority to Transact Business in Virginia; Annual Registration:

State Corporation Commission
Clerk's Office
P.O. Box 1197
Richmond, VA 23218
(866) 722-2551

Security Registration; Franchise Registration; Trademark Registration:

Director
State Corporation Commission
Division of Securities and Retail Franchising
1220 Bank Street, 4th Floor, Jefferson Bldg.
Richmond, VA 23219

State Taxes

State Taxes; Income Tax Withholding:

Virginia Department of Taxation
Office Services Division
P.O. Box 1880
Richmond, VA 23282-1880
(804) 367-8031

Labor Regulations

Unemployment Insurance:

Virginia Employment Commission
Northern Virginia Office
Tax Section
8000 Lee Highway
Falls Church, VA 22042

Director
Virginia Employment Commission
Unemployment Insurance Services Division
P.O. Box 1358
Richmond, VA 23211
(804) 786-3004

Workers' Compensation Insurance:

Claims Manager
Industrial Commission of Virginia
P.O. Box 1794
Richmond, VA 23214
(804) 367-2075

Employment of Aliens:

Officer in Charge
U.S. Department of Justice
Immigration and Naturalization Services
4420 North Fairfax Drive
Arlington, VA 22203
(703) 235-4025

Federal Taxes

Internal Revenue Service (IRS)

The IRS assigns federal identification numbers to businesses. The IRS will also be able to provide information on social security tax and federal unemployment tax requirements. Individuals should call the toll free numbers listed below and the IRS will provide an information kit and any forms appropriate for the specific type of business.

Internal Revenue Service
Northern Virginia Office
Skyline Center
5205 Leesburg Pike
Baileys Crossroads, VA 22041
(800) 424-3676
(800) 424-1040

General Assistance

The Director of Economic Development is available to provide individuals and businesses with additional information on the city and to respond to inquiries concerning establishing or expanding a business in the City of Fairfax. For assistance, please contact the Director of Economic Development at:

Economic Development
Room 308, City Hall
10455 Armstrong Street
Fairfax, VA 22030
(703) 385-7862

Checklist

All businesses in the City of Fairfax require the following:

- ___ Business Privilege License
- ___ Business Return Filing: Tangible Personal Property, Machinery and Tools
- ___ Local, State and Federal Taxes Filing
- ___ Occupancy Permit

Some businesses may also be required to comply with regulations relating to the following:

- ___ Authority to Transact Business in Virginia
- ___ Board of Architectural Review
- ___ Certificate of Incorporation
- ___ Certificate of Partnership
- ___ Certificate of Occupancy
- ___ Fire Prevention Code Permit
- ___ Health Inspections
- ___ Meals Tax
- ___ Registration of Trade Name
- ___ Rental Housing Occupancy Permit
- ___ Security Alarm Permit
- ___ Sign Permit
- ___ Building and/or Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing, Permits
- ___ Special Use Permit
- ___ Transient Lodging Tax
- ___ Vehicle Sticker
- ___ Massage Establishments
- ___ Pawnbrokers and Precious Metal Dealers
- ___ Handgun Dealers
- ___ Nonresidential or residential use permit

Community Development and Planning (City of Fairfax)

<http://www.ci.fairfax.va.us/Services/CommDevPlan/CDP.htm>

Residential and Nonresidential Use Application (City of Fairfax)

<http://www.ci.fairfax.va.us/Services/CommDevPlan/docs/CERT OF OCC99.pdf>

Virginia Department of Taxation

(Main Website, Online Sales Tax Registrations)

<http://www.tax.state.va.us/>

Fairfax County Circuit Court Clerk

(Registration of Trade Name, Certificate of Partnerships)

<http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/courts/circuit/homepage.htm>

Virginia State Corporation Commission

<http://www.state.va.us/scc/>

Department of Professional and Occupational License Board for Contractors

<http://www.state.va.us/dpor/indexne.html>

